

# The Traveller's Library

"Now we must obey water restrictions, because Queensland has been devastated by a long trout."

It was hard to suppress my laughter upon reading this sentence, but one look at the earnest face of the ESL student who had chosen to begin her essay with these words was enough to quell any giggles. I gently pointed out, that's not how "drought" was spelt.

Managing Study Group Australia's Brisbane campus library has meant I've encountered a number of amusing linguistic bloopers. This is because part of my work involves providing academic support to international students from the organisation's three educational divisions: Embassy CES (an English language college), Martin College (a vocational training college), and the Charles Sturt University Brisbane Study Centre.

I offer advice on writing and research to a fluctuating population of 700 non-native-English-speaking students from far-flung and exotic locations, from Abu Dhabi to Rangoon. My job has all the highlights of travel without any of the inconvenience. The world comes to me at the library everyday.

When I'm not proofreading students' assignments or introducing them to the art of referencing, I'm doing everything else – Study Group Brisbane Library is a one-person show!

Study Group specialises in education and training for international students. It aims to provide students with a wide range of opportunities from English language tuition to high school, college and university study. The company has 20 teaching centres in locations throughout the English-speaking world, with five in Australia.

A big advantage of working in a small library is the personalised service you can provide clients. I know most library users by name, and many of them drop in for a chat as much as for books or assignment advice.

The majority of my work in the library to date has involved giving it a 'face': raising its profile and giving it a real presence in the organisation.

This has meant modernising library systems, creating new services then marketing these improvements to entice clients.

My first task was to implement an Integrated Library System (Ex Libris ALEPH). This involved (copy) cataloguing all the items in the collection, populating the computerised bibliographic database with their records then formulating a loans policy before launching the new circulation system.

This was manageable and affordable for our library thanks to the existence of UNILINC, a not-for-profit cooperative which formed to develop and operate a library network for the benefit of its members. Most Australian Study Group Libraries are UNILINC members. Membership entitles us to use UNILINC's shared ILS, with costs being divided between all member institutions. We also participate in resource-sharing activities with affiliated libraries, taking advantage of reciprocal borrowing and interlibrary lending. Access to larger libraries' collections is a tremendous bonus for our students.

Other projects include designing, delivering and evaluating a variety of information literacy workshops; co-ordinating the relocation of the library to a new location; creating a games corner where students can play quiet games such as chess, scrabble and cards and preparing content for an upcoming library website.

However the most rewarding part of my job is getting to know the students. I'm pleased to say it's starting to seem as if many of the students now find coming to the library rewarding as well. In fact, I was recently touched, when a student who had just graduated, came back to the library and declared she wanted to give me a hug before returning to Korea. (Don't worry – of course she meant a hug!)

My time as a solo librarian has been daunting and sometimes overwhelming, but always challenging, enjoyable and interesting. Working in an OPAL means I don't have the

guidance and expertise of more experienced library staff to rely on. I've benefited enormously from the time and advice given to me by my mentors through the QUT Mentor Scheme, and regular communication with other interstate Study Group Library staff.

I look forward to continued adventures at Study Group Brisbane Library - the traveller's library.

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...gives a voice to the new generation of library and information professionals. If you have any suggestions or topics for this column, please contact the column co-ordinators, Kate Davis, [davis.kate@gmail.com](mailto:davis.kate@gmail.com), or Naomi Doessel, [naomi.doessel@au.ey.com](mailto:naomi.doessel@au.ey.com)



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